(b) if not, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the rounds of the above mentioned talks has not so far been completed;

(d) the number of talks taken place for this purpose; and

(e) what are the factors responsible for the failure of these talks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (e) The Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations were launched at the fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) held in Doha in November 2001. The Doha Ministerial Declaration had provided that these negotiations shall be concluded not later than 1 January 2005. These negotiations which were stalemated at the fifth WTO Ministerial Conference held in Cancun in September 2003 re-commenced after the 1 August 2004 Decision of the WTO General Council adopting the Framework Agreement. Commonly called the "July Framework", this Decision provided a road map for the WTO negotiations up to the Sixth Ministerial conference of the WTO in Hong Kong and China, which was subsequently held in December 2005. The Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration resolved to conclude the WTO negotiations in 2006.

These negotiations were suspended on 24 July 2006 in view of the wide gaps in the positions of WTO Members, particularly in respect of market access and domestic support issues in agriculture. In view of this, the negotiations could not conclude by December 2006 as decided at Hong Kong.

Since the failure in July 2006, the WTO Members have been holding consultations at both Ministerial and Senior Official level in bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral formats with a view to making progress in all areas of the negotiations. As a result, the negotiations resumed on 7 February, 2007. On 17 July 2007, the Chairmen of the WTO's Committee on Agriculture (Special Session) and the Negotiating Group of Market Access brought out Draft Modalities on Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) respectively. Multilateral discussions on the two Draft Modalities texts are being held since September 2007. Negotiations in Agriculture, NAMA and all other areas including Services and Rules are being held in accordance with the mandate contained in the Doha Ministerial Declaration; the 1 August 2004 Decision of the WTO General Council adopting the Framework Agreement; and the Hong Kong Ministerial declaration of December 2005.

Throughout the negotiations, India has been working constructively with coalition partners in Developing Country groupings, such as the G-20 the G-33, G-90, and NAMA 11 to achieve an outcome that would appropriately reflect the development dimension of the Doha Round Mandate.

New product to replace polythene

†871. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering to launch a new product to replace polythene;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether this new product will be cheaper and comfortable in comparison to polythene?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) No sir. However, research and development is going on in CSIR and other Institutions to produce bio-degradable plastics by addition of certain additives like starch, etc. in polythene.

Slow down in exports

872. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:
SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the rate of growth of exports targeted during 2007-08;

(b) what has been the actual performance during April-July, 2007;

(c) in which sectors there has been a slowdown and causes for slowdown, other than the strengthening of the rupee; and

(d) what is the remedial action taken or proposed to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The export target for the year 2007-08 has been set at US$ 160 billion with a growth rate of 27% over the achievement during the previous year.

(b) During April-July, 2007 exports reached a level of US$ 46.8 billion.

(c) During the first half of the current year, as per the latest available preliminary estimates, slow growth was registered in the export of a number of items including handicraft, a large number of textile items, Tea, Coffee, Fruits & Vegetables, Carpet, Plastic & Linoleum, Cashew, Cotton, Yarn, Fabric & made-ups, Jute Manufacturing including floor covering, etc. While the appreciation of the Rupee is one of the major reasons for the slowdown of exports, the other factors responsible such slowdown include movement of exchange rate and price level of competing countries, input prices, productivity, domestic capacity, foreign demand, etc.

(d) The Government has been interacting with the Export Promotion Councils on a regular basis to ascertain the problems faced by them in respect of export of specific commodities. Based on their suggestions appropriate measures are taken from time to time to fine tune export promotion strategy and improve export performance.

Geographical indication to Darjeeling Tea

873. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to award geographical indication tag to the Darjeeling Tea;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government is implementing any project to boost the export of tea from India?